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ABSTRACT

The concept of education has been changing; "human development" is a more accurate description of what we do. Turbulences in society which have the greatest bearing on the future of continuing education include the failure of the United States in distributing social goods; changes in the nature of administration; modern communications which extend beyond the community; and the perils to individuality and citizenship in the technologic society. Challenges to higher adult education include: public responsbility (encouraging young people to enter local government service and inventing new forms of helping professions); urban strategies (how far should the university go?); profision of conferences at which laymen may learn to understand the goals of academic freedom and excellence and scholars learn to reconcile learning resources with public need; and mastery of educational technology. University agencies of adult learning should give leadership to a cooperative effort; should extend their learning resources into community systems to advance understanding of the federal structure in America. (EB)

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ADULT CONFERENCES AND COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

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One of the interesting paradoxes today is that the public places education high upon the agenda of the nation at a time when the efficacy of education itself is doubted. This disparity not only produces expansion in educational debate; it also has moved the idea of education from the enclosures of schools and colleges into the learning space of the community; indeed, "education" is no longer as accurate a description of what we do as is human development. Education is being displaced like everything else -- an explosion of human activity, forced outward by technology, sprawling across the ramparts of old and outmoded institutions, withering still further those present vestiges of the primary relationships among people, and centralizing man and his activity, and those questions about who he is, in cities.

Equal to or greater in importance than the shifts in the idea of education are far-reaching turbulences in the fabric of society. These turbulences flow from the reorganization of society from rural to urban life, from the imbalance between social and technological invention, and from confusions and discord about where such turbulences are leading the human race. The issues are many, but some may be singled out as having greatest bearing upon education in general, and upon the future promise of continuing education in particular.

First, perhaps the central American paradox is the success of the United States in producing and distributing economic and technological goods, and how less than successful the United States appears to be in producing and distributing social goods. Technologic efficient agriculture shoved aside those people which it no longer required. These same people reappeared as rural groups living lives of social despair at the center of the largest cities. The mechanical coal digger reduced the number of miners by half in a single decade, and the whole of Appalachia became a region apart, an enormous hinterland of human wastage. The diffusion of health science decreased the mortality of babies and increased the pressures of population growth upon resources. Industrial processes which produce consumer goods also pollute and con gest the environment. While countries may intervene unilaterally in the world, multi-lateral issues become the answer, only to

be met with unprepared national institutions, on the one hand, and primitive international systems, on the other.

Second, rather than the now commonplace reference to the growth of leisure at the expense of work, it seems certain that the meaning of work will be broadened. Education and knowledge help people to change present jobs, enlarge them, and create new ones. More tasks, more creative and less repetitive, become recognized as work. More jobs on the human serving side rise to prominence in the technologic society. Indeed, it is likely that already the meaning of work has expanded far beyond its recognition by social policies; this may be observed by the severe shortages in many service occupations together with the reluctance to explore new kinds of occupations.

In addition to an expanded meaning of work, more occupations are certain to be devoted to overall decision-making concerned with social policies which govern the balance of liberties and restraints. For a decade or more, the most rapid growth in occupations has occurred in public workers at all levels. More and more of these are public specialists, not involved with direct administration, but to facilitating the use of knowledge in public affairs. Such duties are on the frontier of the technologic society.

Third, truly monumental changes in the nature of administration are appearing. Whatever the reason, formal, authoritative, and hierarchal models of administration are now being resisted: conditions which are reducing current administrative effectiveness. The alienation of students from central authority groups is one example; the suspicion of many citizens that formal government has lost touch with the diversity of human needs is another. The administrative charts of large corporations, reforms in academic governance, and the widespread explorations with "participatory democracy", call for fresh ideas of organization which are not now expressed in formal administrative codes of procedure and delegation of powers.

Fourth, the nature of modern communications expands beyond the area-, regional, and metropolitan limits of what is meant by community. Indeed, use of the term "community" is defective for it brings to mind relationships of space and time which, in the specializing technologic society, no longer exist as they once did. Increasingly, a community is one among many centers of communication and transportation, fitting into much larger patterns

of exchange. Citizens give more attention to these patterns than they do to the more local "community". One author has referred to the expanded version of community as the beginning of the "post-city age". M. M. Webber states: "Only in the limited geographical, physical sense in any modern metropolis a discreet, unitary, identifiable phenomenon. At most, it is a localized node within the integrating international networks, finding its significant identity as contributor to the workings of that larger system."

At the same time, such patterns of social transaction among cities leads each of them to a common international loyalty and interdependence, loyalties which often transcend national boundaries and policies. Satellite communications, the growth of official and tourist travel, international commerce, and the common characteristics of an international middle class all lend credence to the growing fact that people who live in cities, wherever they may be in the world, share an urban creed. K. E. Boulding speaks of this condition when he says:

> "...the future of the city as an institution probably depends more on the future of the international system than it does on any other aspect of social life. More than any other aspect of the socio-sphere, the international system is destroying the city, either physically by bombing or more critically by eroding its problem-solving capacity through the withdrawal of both intellectual and physical resources into the international system itself. The brain drain into the international system and the war industry is one of the principal reasons why the city receives so little attention..."

Fifth, the several social sciences are providing more understanding of these shifts in the technological society. There is more to be taught about them, and more knowledge and experience to be shared. More is known and more people are aware of the perils to individuality and citizenship in the technologic society. Yet, storehouses af new knowledge about human and natural resources, and environmental development remain little used, or limited to those who produced it. Research and development has become a fine art. It is also a large expenditure, in industrial technology, military weaponry, and agriculture. Health science is perhaps bhe only exception to

the lack of interest in research and development on the quality of human life. In the field of human learning, for example, public expenditures for research and development are less than 5 percent of the whole.

While research dealing with human development and the quality of life need more emphasis, an even greater lag exists in the process of "development". Using technology can even enhance decision-making, as educational technology illustrates. But, choosing from any options, converting them to social policy, and devising and accepting disciplined self-controls, is finally a process of human thought and interaction. Much more is known about these human disciplines, from both domestic and international experiences, than is shared or taught. Enlarging the inventiveness of democratic choice-making in an international system of cities is all the challenge that universities and their adult education leaders would appear to need for the balance of the Twentieth Century.

I derive the following challenges to continuing education with an eye to the notion of community - - in this kind of era. The first one focuses upon what, for want of a better term, I will call public responsibility. Our country is already into a great debate, if not a crisis in social relations, over the restraints placed on individuality by post-industrial technology. As Prof. Mesthene and other suggest, technology may enlarge the individuality and choices of persons <u>if</u> we master a new kind of citizenship which helps us perform in a community of organizations. For it is certain that the meaning of community will continue to shift away from the direct relationships of persons toward transactions of individuals in and through economic, political, religious, education, and public service groups. There are two aspects to this that I wish to emphasize, for whatever education is able to do about them, the leaders of the conference technique are in a determinant position.

The first is doing something truly monumental about the importance of the community professions. While teaching in the schools or serving as an appointed or elected official, the importance of those who will be serving local government will continue to grow. While there are vast imperfections in the conduct of Federal Government, the past decades have seen rising performance levels with the most complex of domestic and international

problems. But at state, county, and city levels, officials are hamstrung by forms which were developed in the Nineteenth Century, now trying to make them work on late 20th Century problems. This incongruity is so apparent and has become so dangerous that no more urgent business exists in education than to encourage more young people to choose local government as a life's work and then to keep them current.

The second aspect is found in the need to invent new forms, and to strengthen present aspects, of the helping professions. As expressive values make in-roads into instrumental values, helping and nurturing is bound to be taken up by more people, either on a paid or a volunteer basis. There is no greater challenge in an era of vast ideological change than to do better at helping people learn how to reach out to the poor, to teach the infirm, and to encompass the needs of the wounded. In the process, I hope you will consider the needof creating and developing careers for the poor in order that those who understand their own people may take up nurturing roles and move through them and study to higher levels of practice.

Your second overall challenge is contained within the urban strategies of our time. You are already in the middle of the great claim now placed upon educational centers to do more about urban problems. But your institutions will face the old dilemma of education: how far should it go beyond providing forms of individual fulfillment to intervening in the community to effect social change. One must wonder what the Seventies will bring to us as we consider how best to assist people holding posts of urban power, on the one hand, and on the other hand how to insist upon educational opportunity for those whose lives continue to be blunted by poverty and racial and other forms of discrimination.

The third overall challenge to experts on the conference technique springs from another paradox - - that in a society in which the learning force has grown larger than the labor force that we find on every side that people fail to understand the relationship of educational activity to them and to their communities.

The decade of the Sixties ends as perhaps the most turbulent period in the history of the American college and university. The events tumble one

after the other, each more remarkable than the previous. While academic people plead on every side for understanding of the many pressures on academic life, it is not always possible to distinguish differences of attitude between college alumni and the remainder of the population.

Many more graduates now make up the constituents who have an interest in the larger enrollments of students, academic efforts in research and development, far-flung services, and the rise in the costs of higher education. The growth of higher education could not have taken place without widespread esteem on the part of alumni. Moreover, this growth could not have occurred without the public recognition that academic institutions had become major centers of modern life, necessary to help people of all ages to cope with technological change, augmented by the awareness that the very health of the society is at stake. Educational historians may see in the years 1945-65 a time when a great public awakening occurred about the presence of universities, fostering the evolution of a more humanitarian man.

The historians may also marvel over the failure of the stewards of academic institutions to nurture this awareness into clearly reasoned understanding. This failure to capitalize on the public interest is evidenced in several ways: new, yet neglected, constituencies; frequently unbridled competition among institutions; the disinclination for establishing institutional goals; the enactment of compulsory systems of public control; raging stateside battles over third-rate colleges determined to become fifth-rate universities. One may conjecture that somewhere along the way the general public lost some of their esteem for the gladiators, even as students were giving up their placid acceptance of the high school format and resisting the arrogation of their learning to the lockstep.

Academic leaders have frequently responded to these inadequacies in a tactical sense, often with the aim of politicizing the growing number of interested groups in order to gain support for particular colleges and universities. Meanwhile, recent observations suggest that trustees, faculties, students, and administrators may hold markedly different views of what academic goals and tasks should be. Administrators spend much time with outside groups. The faculty may not see the importance of interpreting widely the consequences

and changes of their own work. In addition, in the lower schools, the resistance to bond issues has revealed how little interest educators have had in education about education.

Carefully planned forums must be devised in which policy alternatives in academic development are fully discussed. Many laymen, even those who have bever entered a college door, will need to see the significance of the deeper goals of academic freedom and excellence. Scholars need to ponder how to reconcile learning resources with public hopes and despairs. How to initiate these discussions, and how to keep them going, are special duties of leaders of conference and institute programs.

Your fourth challenge refers to educational technology, the area of telecommunications. This is perhaps the most daring and exciting challenge to those who stand midway between the campus and the community. There are times when I believe that the single greatest call to action in education is that we come to equal the mastery of business and the military over the use of the media. The technology is already present as we know: for statewide information networks, computer-access learning centers throughout a city; a college-wide curriculum extended through computer-access into the community. Just as television has claimed the interests of learners for other than learning aims, so has computerization transformed military conquest and explorations of space. But education is not much beyond the pilot stage, interested but casual, involved to be sure, but markedly uncommitted and frequently fearful. We are in great need of conceiving the university as a place whose learning space in the whole community and among whose learning centers is the family computer console, all tied through satellite systems to the heritage of all mankind.

Finally, I want to turn to two basic points about your work. The first concerns how the contemporary university is caught between its own traditional expectations and those of its popular constituencies. As the outward explosions of the technological age found so many human institutions wanting, it was assumed that the center which provides the knowledge upon which the technological age is based would fill the gap. The university, geared to centuries of nurturing a necessary independence, elected to take

up this challenge quite on its own, at the very time when cooperative approaches seemed the only antidote to social fragmentation.

It has become not unreasonable to ask if the university has not gone far enough, as a unilateral force, especially when it comes to intervention in the community. Rather, should not the university devote more of its resources to adding strength to the whole fabric of education in the community? Should it not be creating new institutional forms, supporting them, preparing personnel for them, devising research and development plans, demonstrating, evaluating, all with the hope that every school and college might become attuned to a more zestful, varied, individualized form of community learning?

The questions are unanswerable. The university is involved with community problems whether it desires to be or not. Academic institutions will continue to maintain countless connections with the community, and more are certain to develop. Some of these ties will be managed by interested individuals. Others will depend on policy statements prepared by the institution as a whole. It is also likely that most urban projects, while depending upon community cooperation, will be planned and executed by university personnel: teaching and research related to urban problems; planned research on the features of urban living; consultant services to community groups; the campus as a cultural and conference center; devising special schools and institutes of urban affairs; organizing special off-campus centers to extend resources from departments and schools on the campus.

The function of higher adult education should begin properly, on the other hand, where the problems and opportunities require that many agencies and institutions cooperate in the use of knowledge to enhance community learning. One may expect, therefore, that the activities of adult education will be planned and initiated wherever there exists, or needs to be created, various consortia, metropolitan development groups, educational service agencies, cooperative referral centers, and adult education coordinating councils. Adult learning is not alone the interest of academic centers; a host of other organizations influence the total effort. Accordingly, university agencies of continuing adult learning should give leadership to this cooperative setting.

The second concerns the whole area of civic competencies as it concerns the federal structure of the United States.

Part of the civic alienation from central authority today stems from the lack of an answer to the question: who is responsible? There is everyone to blame and yet, nobody to blame. Congress fosters the breakdown by stressing categorical legislation; administrators have smoothed the way by settling so readily into special interest grooves; upper leadership sanctions it by failing to insist that different kinds of activities be coordinated for the furtherance of overall objectives. Yet no one is really accountable for the development of these insularities in organization because the interplay of so many forces has made it virtually inevitable.

Higher adult education will not merit further attention and support if the field does not work to extend learning resources into community systems in order to advance an understanding of the federal structure in America. How else can one appreciate the urban crisis? How else can the widespread uneasiness if not fear of manipulation be turned to positive support and participation? How else may citizens overcome the national tendency, caused in part by mass media, to overemphasize policies geared to problems and to underemphasize those geared to solutions? How else may citizens remain in command of their own choices while living amid infinite streams of unrelated messages, highlighting the bizarre, dramatizing deficiencies and hopes, and holding out unrealistic expectations about what is feasible?

Adult learning which emphasizes civic policies and community professions will enable adult educators to open the door wider to larger service in the urban society. This task of helping people become more understanding of the relation of the national system to their lives is fundamental. The system while withstanding many pressures, seems now to be facing its most critical test. It is caught between the dynamisms of hope and indignation. What happens to the Federal structure of the United States, and how it weathers the storms ahead may well decide whether the future will be dominated by realized hope or by indignation turned into despair.

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The urban community strategy for continuing education is that this strangely ill-defined field may help the university to refrain from going alone. Continuing education must try to extend resources for nurturing the organizations and institutions of urban communities. This extension is not the magical delivery of knowledge, nor the sharing of advice with policy-makers though both are included. Rather, the emphasis is on cooperative learning by people, about themselves as citizens of the family, the community, the country, and the world. The emphasis is a concern for citizenship, for civic competence.

But how puny a concept when thrown up against this paradoxical moment of history! How could such an idea help subdue the anguish across a century of hate and destruction? How could it possibly turn man a bit away from hard-mindedness to tender-heartedness?

But to believe that no single bond surpasses human learning in uniting one man to another.

Well, that is what you have already decided as your cause.

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